



ADDRESSING THE CONDITIONS THAT FOSTER TERRORISM

A United States Army War College Symposium

By Dr. Kent Hughes Butts and Professor Bert B. Tussing¹

“Yet when people lose hope, when societies break down, when countries fragment, the breeding grounds for terrorism are created.”

9/11 Commission Report

In sponsorship with the United States Pacific Command (USPACOM), the National Intelligence Council (NIC), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States Army War College's Center for Strategic Leadership (CSL) conducted a symposium-workshop entitled *Addressing the Conditions that Foster Terrorism* at the Collins Center, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, on June 8-10, 2005. The symposium examined the strategies, coordination efforts, and processes devoted to diminishing the underlying conditions of terrorism and demonstrated the pressing need for greater emphasis on this key element of the United States (U.S.) combating terrorism (CT) policy.

One of the four goals of the 2003 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (NSCT) is to “Diminish the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit.” Although leaders of many terrorist organizations are from the ranks of the educated, the foot soldiers of terrorism are often drawn from the deprived masses of failed and failing states. As stated by Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, “I believe we can address the problem of extremism and terrorism by delivering better and more widespread development.” While the U.S. may have been successful in its efforts to attack and disrupt key terrorist organizations, lack of development and resulting shortfalls in the legitimacy of governance continue to provide terrorist organizations a feeding ground of frustration and futility that is replenishing their numbers faster than the U.S. can diminish them, either by incarceration or in battle. In the words of the Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Pacific, Lieutenant General Wallace C. Gregson, “We’re winning battles; but what about the war?”



While addressing underlying conditions of terrorism is important, it is but one component of a comprehensive and balanced U.S. CT policy that includes protecting the homeland and attacking and disrupting terrorist organizations. Successfully focusing all elements and instruments of national power on combating terrorism will require a broad based and prioritized CT strategy, an interagency process capable of oversight and execution, and a mechanism for implementing the strategy at the regional level. It should also synchronize elements of the parallel efforts to address failed and failing states, post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization, and other government sponsored developmental efforts. Thus, through a series of panel sessions and workshops the symposium addressed extant and evolving CT strategies, interagency organization, process and effectiveness, and made recommendations toward their improvement.

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THE POWER OF A COMBATING TERRORISM STRATEGY

The Bush administration has undertaken a principal-level appraisal of its approach to combating terrorism that will result in a new CT strategy upon which each agency and element of U.S. national power can base its own CT efforts. Any new strategy should reflect the three pillars of the President's National Security Strategy: defense, diplomacy, and development. Failing that, the U.S. will mount an inefficient, ad hoc effort characterized by unsynchronized agency plans. The strategy would: focus the government on a long range vision, helping senior leaders avoid the "tyranny of today's crisis;" define the strategic concepts necessary to achieve that vision; and specify clearly the required resources and leadership. Signed and prioritized by the president, the strategy would define his expectations of how resources will be used by matching actions to achieve the end state. Such a strategy organizes the interagency toward a collective end state, aligns priorities through risk assessment, and defines roles and participants. It also serves to frame public discussions, maintain the will of the people over the long haul, and advance U.S. strategic communications themes. Finally, the strategy would guide the U.S. government's relationships with partner nations for managing transnational threats, and it would put combating terrorism in perspective within broader national strategies.

The current NSCT is being supplanted by the Department of Defense drafted *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (NMSP-WOT). These documents will likely underpin any future U.S. CT strategy. They include many of the elements necessary for a balanced strategy to defeat terrorism. However, if this new strategy is to be effective in addressing our Nation's primary national security threat, it will have presidential priority and emphasis—no strategy will work unless the leader grants authority and holds principals accountable for its execution. It should also de-legitimize anti-American perceptions that feed terrorism, omit the "War on Terror" and anti-Islamic rhetoric and treat terrorism as a transnational threat that all nations have in common, and be complimented by a strategic communications program supported by all cabinet members that promotes greater tolerance and cultural respect.

A central objective of the CT strategy should be to undermine the inclination to use violence for political objectives by fostering legitimate civil societies that protect fundamental human rights and provide sustainable economic development. While the strategy would remain concerned about how the United States government would defeat the immediate threat of terrorism, its important international component should build coalitions and leverage the comparative advantages of both partner countries and the private sector. The strategy should include resources to promote and sustain long-term commitments to develop good governance and civil societies, including education and economic opportunities in developing societies. Similarly a successful strategy will reflect an understanding of the regional cultural differences and interests of partner nations.



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MAXIMIZING INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

A successful plan to maximize interagency coordination and cooperation will: identify an agency to lead the interagency CT process, establish the necessary authority required for successful leadership, and provide guidance toward achieving an appropriate balance in reaching immediate and long-term CT objectives.

Who should lead? Coordinating the multifaceted CT process is a leadership challenge complicated by the duality of a National Security Council (NSC) and a Homeland Security Council (HSC). Many authorities believe that, in order to establish the required strong and effective leadership, the HSC should be combined with the NSC; and the broadened NSC should be in charge of coordinating the three central elements of combating terrorism: diplomacy, defense, and development. The depth of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) makes it the best choice to be the NSC's executive agent in this process. Although the strength of the NSC varies as a reflection of the Administration's vision, no one outside of the NSC could reasonably be expected to coordinate the complex contingencies that characterize the requirements to address the terrorist threat and the conditions that allow that threat to grow and prosper.

What authorities will be required? A serious CT effort requires clear presidential authority. Given the large number of National Security Presidential Directives (NSPDs) and Homeland Security Presidential Directives (HSPDs) on related topics, it is essential that a new presidential directive be published clearly specifying responsibilities, authorities and resourcing. Short of this clear delineation the Nation risks an ad hoc interagency approach to the issues,

subject as much to the strengths of personalities as the strengths of policy. To provide unity of effort, Congress should enact legislation folding the HSC into the NSC.

Funding of the effort to combat terrorism is critical. The Administration's resourcing direction was characterized as ad hoc, as illustrated by iterative supplemental authorizations surrounding the "deny, defeat, diminish, and defend" part of the war on terrorism. With a closer eye to addressing development, diplomacy and education, the government should create a replenishable funding band for these efforts, disbursed at the direction of the President with "notwithstanding authority" and flexibly appropriated with "no year" dollars for assistance to partner countries in urgent need. In shifting to a deliberate, long-term budgeting process, the United States would be better capable of supporting the larger effort devoted to combating terrorism. To provide for this process, there should be an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review of resource allocation to support the full range of requirements in the ongoing war. From that point, a partnership could be formed with the NSC overseeing policy and prioritization, and OMB resourcing requirements for that policy's execution.

Achieving immediate and the long-term objectives in the interagency effort. Many issues should be addressed in the short term. Interagency CT efforts throughout the government are characterized by difficulties in coordination, efficiency and effectiveness. Interoperability issues, intelligence and information sharing, and failure to understand the "big picture" by the interagency components are obstacles to executing a coherent CT strategy. Any short term solution should call for the immediate development of a single security clearance system, administered and recognized throughout the U.S. government. Also, the executive branch should continue and expand personnel exchanges to promote a clearer perspective of the roles and capabilities of each component of the interagency.

Longer term solutions may be borrowed from the Center for Strategic and International Studies' *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols* project. Personnel systems should strengthen the interagency mechanism through rotational assignments between agencies. A formalized education system designed to ensure professional competency and development should include a robust interagency exercise program that would engender a sense of understanding, cooperation, and confidence in the interagency's ability to handle real-world contingencies. Accompanying these initiatives should be a genuine long-term interagency planning process that would address comprehensive end states, integrate local, regional, and global perspectives, and emphasize building the capacities of our international partners.



FACILITATING A PROCESS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

Improving the ability of the Nation to effectively combat terrorism at the regional level requires the adoption of a National Security Planning Guidance (NSPG) to provide broad regional planning guidance. Armed with this guidance, the new NCTC would identify regions requiring specific CT plans, and shape specific strategies incorporating all elements of national power to address terrorism therein. The NCTC would oversee development of specific supporting implementation plans by assigning/reinforcing lead agency responsibilities. The Combatant Commanders, of course, would serve as the primary interlocutors for interagency coordination of the use of military power to address terrorism in their regions. Other lead agencies would coordinate their responsibilities into the plans, emphasizing collaborative approaches currently employed by interagency working groups and country teams. Current interagency cooperation efforts to develop Mission Performance Plans, Regional Action Plans, and Theater Security Plans could serve as examples towards these ends. The NCTC would then monitor the implementation of these plans.

The Administration needs to engender a consistent policy for inculcating interagency collaboration as the default working environment in the U.S. government. This can only be accomplished by strong and repeated senior level emphasis, the incorporation of interagency training and education within all government organizations, and the regular

use of methods and instruments such as interagency working groups, joint interagency coordination groups, country teams, and collaborative software tools to facilitate interagency coordination.

There are a number of potential obstacles to the regional implementation of strategies designed to address underlying conditions, including uncoordinated funding lines through multiple agencies; persistent lack of important information and intelligence exchange due to security classification conflicts; and authority for decision-making retained at too high a level for responsive actions. Finally, greater international cooperation could be gained, from both the public and private sectors, by opening dialogue with nation states and international political fora over a common set of CT concerns. For instance, by addressing all transnational threats, rather than terrorism alone, the United States is liable to find a more receptive partnership from organizations like ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum. The use of the terms Global War on Terror and targeting Islamic extremists smack of a western war on Islam, and make it difficult for moderate Muslim states to support U.S. CT efforts.



CONCLUSION

The symposium's attendees arrived at the common conviction that terrorism would never be contained simply by killing the terrorists and disrupting their support mechanisms. Terrorism itself is only a second order effect of regional instability and the conditions of deprivation that have left entire populations searching for an alternative, any alternative, to a cycle of frustration and hopelessness. While the United States cannot end this cycle on its own, it can begin a new cycle of empowerment for partner states to take up their own course; but that empowerment will require a new dedication, a new strategy, and a new focus of the entire U.S. government interagency effort.

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